

THE AMERICAN VETERAN
AUGUST 2007 EDITION

SEGMENT TITLE: NEWS YOU CAN USE

DANIELA MARCHUS, HOST AND NOW FOR SOME NEWS YOU CAN USE. LOVED ONES ARE JUST A FREE PLANE TRIP AWAY FROM BEING WITH SERVICE MEMBERS INJURED IN OPERATION IRAQI FREEDOM AND OPERATION ENDURING FREEDOM. ALL THANKS TO DONATIONS OF FREQUENT FLYER MILES TO THE FISHER HOUSE FOUNDATION.

JIM WEISKOPF, VICE PRESIDENT FOR COMMUNICATION, FISHER HOUSE FOUNDATION: WE DO TWO THINGS WE EITHER LET THE SERVICE MEMBER LEAVE THE HOSPITAL TO GO HOME FOR A SHORT PERIOD OF TIME AND RETURN OR WE BRING THEIR FAMILY AND FRIENDS TO BE BY THEIR BED SIDE.”

MARCHUS: THE FISHER HOUSE FOUNDATION PROVIDES HOUSING TO FAMILIES WHILE THEIR LOVED ONES ARE RECOVERING. IT IS A NON PROFIT ORGANIZATION SPONSORED BY THE DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE AND DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS. FAMILIES HAVE USED MORE THAN 11 THOUSAND FREE AIRLINE TICKETS IN THE “HERO MILES” PROGRAM, SAVING THEM MORE THAN 14 MILLION DOLLARS.

WEISKOPF: SOME OF THE FAMILIES BELIEVE IT OR NOT HAVE USED 30, 40, OR EVEN 50 TICKETS BECAUSE THEIR LOVED ONES ARE IN THE HOSPITAL FOR 12 MONTHS, 18 MONTHS, 2-YEARS OR MORE.

MARCHUS: THERE ARE 38 FISHER HOUSES LOCATED NEAR MILITARY AND VA MEDICAL CENTERS. FIVE MORE HOUSES ARE CURRENTLY UNDER PLANNING AND CONSTRUCTION. FOR MORE INFORMATION ON HOW TO DONATE YOUR FREQUENT FLYER MILES OR TO APPLY FOR A FREE TICKET VISIT THEIR WEBSITE AT (Link to non-VA website. VA is not responsible for and does not endorse information contained on non-VA websites.) WWW.FISHERHOUSE.ORG.

HOMELESS VETERANS IN 37 STATES ARE GETTING MUCH NEEDED FEDERAL HELP. THE DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS SELECTED 92 COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS TO RECEIVE 24-MILLION DOLLARS IN GRANTS.

THESE PUBLIC AND COMMUNITY NON-PROFIT GROUPS WILL USE THE FUNDS TO PROVIDE TRANSITIONAL HOUSING, CARE FOR THE MENTALLY ILL, AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE. SOME CITIES LIKE ALBANY NEW YORK HAVE RECEIVED MORE THAN \$460-THOUSAND DOLLARS, WHICH WILL BE USED TO PROVIDE SAFE AND COMFORTABLE HOUSING. SINCE 2001 THE US GOVERNMENT HAS REDUCED VETERAN HOMELESSNESS BY 20-PERCENT. IDENTITY THIEVES ARE NOW TARGETING SERVICE

MEMBER'S FAMILIES. THE AMERICAN RED CROSS IS WARNING PEOPLE ABOUT A SCAM WHERE A CALLER IDENTIFIES HIM OR HERSELF AS A RED CROSS EMPLOYEE. THEY TELL THEM THEIR LOVED ONE WAS INJURED OR EVEN KILLED WHILE ON DUTY IN IRAQ OR AFGHANISTAN. THEN THEY ASK TO VERIFY THE SERVICE MEMBER'S SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBER AND DATE OF BIRTH.

DEVORAH GOLDBURG, AMERICAN RED CROSS SPOKESPERSON: IF SOMEONE WERE IN FACT INJURED THE MILITARY WOULD BE CONTACTING THE FAMILY DIRECTLY, IN THAT INSTANCE THE RED CROSS WOULD NOT CONTACT THE FAMILY."

MARCHUS: THE RED CROSS IS ALSO TELLING FAMILIES IF THEY DON'T RECOGNIZE A CALLER TO NOT GIVE OUT ANY PERSONAL INFORMATION.

GOLDBURG: PEOPLE NEED TO BE A LITTLE MORE DISCERNING RIGHT NOW BECAUSE UNFORTUNATELY THERE REALLY IS A SCAM GOING ON AND IT IS TARGETING MILITARY FAMILIES AND THEY'RE ALREADY IN A VULNERABLE POSITION."

MARCHUS: THE RED CROSS OPERATES A 24-HOUR EMERGENCY COMMUNICATION SYSTEM FOR MILITARY FAMILIES. FOR MORE INFORMATION, CHECK OUT THEIR WEB SITE AT REDCROSS.ORG. WITH AN ANNUAL BUDGET OF THREE-BILLION DOLLARS DEVOTED FOR MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES - EVEN MORE MENTAL HEALTH CARE IS ON THE WAY FOR VETERANS. RECENTLY, AT A FOUR-DAY MENTAL HEALTH SUMMIT VA'S SECRETARY JIM NICHOLSON ANNOUNCED A NEW PLAN TO HIRE ONE-HUNDRED EMPLOYEES TO CONDUCT READJUSTMENT COUNSELING AT COMMUNITY BASED VET CENTERS.

VA SECRETARY JIM NICHOLSON: THE PURPOSE OF THIS INITIATIVE IS TO PROVIDE ASSESSMENT AND BRIEF TREATMENT FOR VETERANS WHO MAY NOT REQUIRE SPECIAL MENTAL HEALTH CARE.

MARCHUS: SEC NICHOLSON EARLIER THIS YEAR ANNOUNCED THE HIRING OF ONE-HUNDRED MEDICAL CENTER EMPLOYEES TO SERVE AS ADVOCATES FOR THE SEVERELY WOUNDED – AND - ONE-HUNDRED COMBAT VETERANS TO CONDUCT OUTREACH TO GLOBAL WAR ON TERROR VETERANS AT VET CENTERS.

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